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## **With Occurrence of Concussions in the NFL Under Attack?**

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# With occurrence of concussions, is the NFL under attack?

The National Football League has seen revenues soar to billions of dollars. Advertising has successfully built off-season activities into can't miss TV events.



**Anthony Barilla**

Moreover, the NFL has made regular season games into can't miss events.

Fantasy football allows fans to become more interactive with the game by promoting individual player performance. The individual player may be on a team that normally would not be of interest, but it is now because of potential fantasy points.

This increased interest has caused a spike in ratings. The NFL has become an economic juggernaut, replacing baseball as America's most popular sport. So why is the NFL under attack? In a word: concussions.

Concussions are defined by Dictionary.com as (1) an injury to the brain, often resulting from a blow to the head, that can cause temporary disorientation, memory loss or unconsciousness, (2) an injury to an organ of the body, usually caused by a violent blow or shaking and (3) any sudden violent jolting or shaking.

The long-term effects of concussions are still relatively unknown. Although a court of law doesn't allow supposition, research does. New research is attempting to detect the by-products of concussions. These by-products possibly include early onset dementia or Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, memory loss, loss of cogitative ability and possible suicidal tendencies.

The recent suicides of retired NFL players Dave Duerson (2/17/2011) and Junior Seau (5/2/2012) made front page news. Both died of a gunshot wound to the chest. Duerson informed his family that he wanted his brain to be used for scientific research at Boston University.

The university is conducting research on chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) caused from football. Researchers confirmed that Duerson suffered from a neurodegenerative disease linked to concussions. Seau's family is considering whether to allow researchers to study his brain, but as of this writing no decision has been made.

The similar natures of their

deaths could be coincidental, but Duerson was known to have suffered a concussion during his career while Seau had no prior reported history of concussions. However, Gina Seau, Junior's ex-wife, reported that Seau did sustain concussions during his career but kept playing.

Seau's approach has been the norm in football, a sport known for tough play. This could cost the NFL millions, if not billions, of dollars. The NFL in its dealings with the National Football League Players Association has recently begun to take a more long-run approach to the health of ex-players.

Standard ex-players' health insurance benefits expire five years after the conclusion of their career. Players must pay for COBRA benefits to extend coverage. The level of need both monetarily and non-monetarily for most retirees can be staggering. This brings us to the reason the NFL is under attack.

If concussions can be linked to Pop Warner football, the cost of insurance could drive some parents (and children) away from the game. If concussions can be linked to high school or college football, the higher insurance costs could cause some schools to drop football.

I realize this statement is borderline sacrilegious in the South, but cuts in education dollars by local and state governments have left many extra-curricular actives subject to cancellation.

If football players do not have the chance to develop in colleges, the NFL could be forced to create a minor league or a developmental league system. The cost of that, coupled with the increased costs of insurance because of the long-run insurance costs, could cause the profit structure of the league to change drastically.

The NFL could lose some of its TV audience if many of the best athletes head into other sports, coupled with decreased player recognition as fewer collegiate athletes enter the league.

My above arguments are all supposition, but the results of concussions are becoming widely known and expensive, just something for the NFL to think about.

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